

Grocery store owner and his wife plus female shopkeeper convicted of operating money service without licence

The male owner of a grocery store and his wife as well as a female shopkeeper were fined \$10,000 to \$35,000 today (November 8) at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts after being convicted of operating a money service without a valid licence.

Acting on information, Customs officers disguised as customers and visited a grocery store in Mong Kok for remitting money to Indonesia on June 16 last year. The wife of the store owner followed the instruction and passed a sheet of paper with remittance information to the shopkeeper at scene for processing. The shopkeeper subsequently collected the money involved from one of the officers and issued a remittance order for the transaction.

Since the money service operator licence of the store has expired on December 11, 2019, the two abovementioned persons and the store owner were considered as operating a money service without a licence.

Under the Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorist Financing Ordinance (AMLO), a person who wishes to operate a remittance and/or money changing service is required to apply for a licence from the C&ED. Any person who operates a money service without a valid licence commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Also, under the AMLO, any person who provides false information in an application for Money Service Operator Licence commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Members of the public may report any suspected unlicensed money service operation to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).